

from the hand of God and with loving fingers fashion its character, and perchance fix its destiny, before a father's or a pastor's influence can reach it, is a part of her privilege and glory. To do thousands of other potent things, the doing of which has made the Christian woman of all ages so radiant with celestial light and their memories so sweetly fragrant, is hers to-day. There is room enough for woman to attain the height of Christian perfectness, without seeking again a fruit which has been forbidden her. It was not to oppress her that Paul wrote as he did; but, being inspired by the Spirit to know the mind of God, he graciously hedged her allotted sphere round about with certain limitations, lest her glory should be sullied and her influence weakened. He impugns the wisdom of God and does woman a great wrong who seeks to lift the restraints imposed upon her in creation, that he may give her a larger sphere. If she heed him, her Eden will again be lost.

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## ARTICLE IX.

### THE DIACONATE AN OFFICE.

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WHATEVER it is, the diaconate should not be merely a name. It has been justly regarded with a certain degree of respect, if not reverence, and still deserves to be, because of its origin, the duties belonging to it, and the men who have *served* God and his church in it. It seems to us that there are cogent reasons why the diaconate should be considered an office, and that it was so considered by the apostolic and primitive churches. We propose to present a few:

1. The first reason which we shall notice is, that it seems probable that an organization of such importance as a Christian church would have *officers*. The Jewish church certainly did have officers whose distinctive business was to manage its temporal and its spiritual affairs. These were

selected from among the people, to perform services which the people were neither allowed, nor expected, to perform. The king was an officer of the church. Even a cursory glance at Leviticus must convince any one that the Jewish church had officers.

Any human organization is incomplete, and cannot accomplish its designed ends, unless it has officers. The machinery of such societies demands, in its manipulations, men whose special business it shall be to manage and direct its workings. Could there for one moment be any government if there were no executors of the law? We should soon become as Patagonians if mere might determined official position. It is part and parcel of a civilized government to have men elected to office. This is specially true of a republican government.

Now as the government of a church is of the first importance, both spiritually and temporally, and especially as our ecclesiastical polity is democratic, is it not in the nature of the case that a church should have officers, specially chosen by the members to the management of its various affairs? Is it not absurd to speak of an organization, especially such an organization, that is without officers? And when men are elected to the management of the spiritual and temporal affairs of a church, are they not elected to a particular service; and if they are elected to a particular service, are they not elected to an office? Are not the officers of our republic servants of the people; and are they any less officers because servants, or servants because officers? The only officers which Congregationalism and, as we think, the New Testament recognize, are those of the local church; and these we suppose to be pastors (*ἐπίσκοποι*) and deacons (*διάκονοι*). It seems probable that those who serve an organization of such importance as the local church, in an elected capacity, should be considered officers. The idea of such an organization seems to demand this.

2. The second reason we shall notice is that the manner in which the deacons ("the seven" in Acts) were elected

and inducted into the special service they were to perform, makes it probable that those thus chosen were considered officers by the apostles and brethren of the apostolic church; and that those who should subsequently perform a similar service in the Christian church, would be entitled to be called officers. "*Manente ratione, manet ipsa lex.*" If the occasion remains, the law itself is still in force. This we believe to be a legitimate principle by which to be governed in the settlement of the various questions to which it applies. Guericke says: "The first deacons were chosen by the church at the proposal of the apostles."<sup>1</sup> Schaff says: "When the first deacons were to be appointed, the twelve call together the multitude of the disciples, and require them to make choice."<sup>2</sup> A similar necessity existing at any time would amply justify a similar proceeding. This illustrates the Latin maxim above quoted.

Now the narrative in Acts is simple, and seems decisive (vi. 1-6). Some of the foreign or Greek-speaking portion of the church murmured, "as if they had not received their equitable share of the daily distribution of food," etc. (Acts ii. 45; iv. 35; vi. 1). Then the apostles, in whose sole control the whole matter had been previously (Acts iv. 35), called the whole church together (*τὸ πλῆθος τῶν μαθητῶν*, the multitude of the disciples), and said, it was "not reason" that they should have the sole care of both the temporal and spiritual affairs of the church (Acts vi. 2), and desired the brethren to select (*ἐπισκεψασθε*) "men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over (*καταστήσομεν, set over*), this business" (vi. 3): i.e. the temporalities of the church, which business was then represented in the daily distributions about which complaint had been made, and which the twelve called "serving tables" (*διακονεῖν τραπέζαις*, vi. 2). This pleased the church, and the church chose seven men, whose names are mentioned in Acts vi. 5, and set them before the apostles (vi. 5, 6). Notice the word here used. They chose (*ἐξελέξαντο, selected out*)

<sup>1</sup> Church History (Shedd's edition), p. 110.<sup>2</sup> Apostolical Church, p. 501.

those whose names are mentioned. We are not told here how this choice was made; but we have a possible and very probable solution of the manner given us in Acts i. 26. In the choice of Matthias to the place of Judas, it is said that "they gave forth their lots" (ἔδωκαν κλήρους). Mosheim says this was the suffrage of the church. The classic use of the word "lots" (κλήρους) allows this interpretation. There is nothing in the use of this word in the New Testament to forbid it. We can make no other supposition, than that "the seven" were chosen by the suffrages of the brethren. It seems, too, that this proceeding should be honored with the appellation of an election. Indeed the word translated "chose" in Acts vi. 5 is the root from whence we have the word "election." But there is never an election to induct men into an ordinary service that is not an office. Election implies office.

After this choice, the seven chosen were set before the apostles (vi. 6) for solemn induction into the service to which they had been already elected. This method of induction the narrative states thus: "And when they [the apostles] had prayed, they laid their hands upon them" (the seven). Of course this act was performed in the presence and with the sanction of the church, by whose free suffrage the choice had been made. The significance of this laying on of hands we shall not stop to discuss. Suffice it to say, the form was similar to the solemn act by which Saul and Barnabas were separated, at the command of the Holy Ghost, to the special work to which they had been called (Acts xiii. 2). The same act, in this instance, must have solemnly signified the separation of "the seven" to the special work to which the suffrages of their peers called them.

Now it is hardly probable that these formal acts of suffrage and ordination or induction, which in some recorded instances were certainly invested with great solemnity, merely indicated a choice to a *service* which was not to be performed in the discharge of the duties of an *office*. Did not the twelve ask for assistant officers? General Grant was

*elect* (*ἐκλεξάμενος*, the word used in Acts vi. 5) President in November 1868, but he was inducted into office, and became chief executive officer of this government, when the oath of office was administered to him in the following March. Was he elected merely to a service and not an office? It seems not. Does not the very idea of election and impressive induction involve that of an office? Can the two ideas well be separated? So "the seven" were elected to an *office* and inducted into it, by a form not wholly dissimilar to that by which General Grant became President, and certainly fully equal to it in impressive solemnity. The formality of the whole transaction recorded in the sixth of Acts is utterly inconsistent with the idea that no office was in question. Men are servants without election and induction, but not servants in an office. If a mere matter of service was involved in the narrative in question, the dignity and solemnity of the transaction seems very much impaired.

The church, as a local organization, could hardly exist, without requiring such service as that to which "the seven" were elected. Dr. Dexter has well said, "since every Christian church has 'temporalities' which require somebody's care and thought — that here was intended to be given a hint and pattern for the copying of every such organization to the world's end."<sup>1</sup> It is true that these men were never called deacons in the Acts, but "the seven." So the apostles were familiarly called "the twelve." But were they any less apostles? Did any one ever doubt who was meant by that term? Neander says: "Nor is it any objection, that in Acts xxi. 8 they were merely called 'the seven,' for as the name "deacon" was then the usual appellation of a certain class of officers in the church, Luke uses this expression to distinguish them from others of the same name, just as 'the twelve' denoted the apostles."<sup>2</sup> Dr. Dexter gives twenty-two instances in which the apostles were designated by this

<sup>1</sup> Congregationalism (edition 1865), p. 133.

<sup>2</sup> Planting and Training, etc., p. 34, note.

appellation. Twenty of these instances occur in the Gospels. So that it cannot be argued that these men were not deacons because they were usually spoken of as "the seven," any more than it can be argued that the apostles were not alluded to by the phrase "the twelve."

We repeat, the church will always require service similar to that to which "the seven" were elected. Is it not fair to consider the case in Acts a sample, and to suppose that those elected to a similar service sustain a similar relation to the church now,—that they are servants in an *official* station? Can we do less than call "the seven" officers of the church, on account of the peculiar and significant manner of their election and induction into service? Are not those now elected in a similar manner also officers as well as servants—servants because officers? Are they not deacons now as well as then?

3. The third reason we shall notice is, that the term used by the apostles in calling for the election of "the seven" was such as to indicate a service so special as to justify calling it an office.

An office or a service is often named from the kind of service rendered. Thus, men are called lawyers when their business pertains to the law; we have judges who judge; surveyors who survey; editors who edit; presidents who preside, etc. "The seven" were chosen to serve tables. The word indicating the service is derived from the same root as the word "deacon." They are the same words, one the verb, the other the noun. Dr. Dexter says: "Moreover, they [the seven] are, for substance, named 'deacons,' in the very Greek words which record the work to which they were chosen (Acts vi. 2), which are *διακοπεῖν τραπέζαις*, which mean literally to *deacon* (i.e. to officiate as deacons at) tables; *διακοπεῖν* being the verb expressing the activity of the noun *διάκονος*, *deacon*."<sup>1</sup> If their service was expressed by the word from whose root the term "deacon" is derived, why were not "the seven" deacons, and why were

<sup>1</sup> Congregationalism (edition 1865), p. 133.

they not substantially called so when they were elected to "deacon tables"? The church demands the same service now. Why, then, shall not those who are chosen to perform it take their title from their service, and be called deacons?

Now those who perform this service are entitled to be called officers, because their service is of a special kind. The laborer who wields the spade is a servant, but not an officer. The private in the ranks is a servant, but not an officer. The operative who stands at the loom is a servant, but not an officer. These, and many like them, perform a service common to a multitude. A general is both a servant and an officer. An overseer in a factory is both a servant and an officer. Men in many positions in life are both servants and officers, because they perform duties common to a few only. The service indicated by *διακονεῖν τραπέζαις* (serving tables) is not common to the many in the church, but the few. It is so special, and is made so by special selection to fill it, that those who perform it, by a common law of title, are officers as well as servants.

The use of the word *διακονεῖν* marks the specialty of the service indicated by it. The word "serve" occurs thirty-two times in our English version of the New Testament. In thirteen instances this word is a translation of the Greek verb *λατρεύειν*; in twelve instances it is a translation of the verb *δουλεύειν*. These indicate such a service as a slave or a hired servant might perform; e.g. Mark iv. 10: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (*λατρεύσεις*). Matt. vi. 24: "No man can serve (*δουλεύειν*) two masters." Acts vii. 7: "And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage (*ὃ ἐὰν δουλεύσωσι*) will I judge, saith God; and after that they shall come forth and serve (*λατρεύσουσι*) me in this place." 2 Tim. i. 3: "I thank God whom I serve" (*λατρεύω*). Paul speaks here as one who, by the blood of Christ, is to receive something for service. Perhaps he thought of what he said in 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. In Romans i. 1 he calls himself a "servant (*δούλος*,

slave) of Jesus Christ," speaking as one whose service belongs to Christ by right of property, as it were. Other passages might be cited, but these are sufficient to show that these words (*λατρεύειν* and *δουλεύειν*) indicate such a service as any Christian, in filial relation to God, would perform in the discharge of the duties which naturally arise from such relations.

The only other word which we have found translated *serve* is *διακονεῖν*. It occurs seven times in which it is translated *serve*.<sup>1</sup> In almost, if not quite, every case it denotes a service of higher and more special nature than that indicated by the other words. "But Martha was cumbered about much serving" (*διακονῶν*, Luke x. 40). Martha was a mistress in her own house; not a slave nor a hired servant. "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: Verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them" (*διακονήσει*, Luke xii. 37). This is the act, not of the servants, but of the *Lord* of the servants. In Luke xvii. 8 this word is used of the act of servants, but not in the discharge of their ordinary duties. When they come in from the field, from their usual duties, the master tells them to serve (*διακόνει*) him while he eats. In Luke xxii. 26, 27 the word is again used with obvious reference to the dignity of service; and so *διακονεῖν* is used in preference to either of the other words. Christ said, "I am among you as one that serveth" (*διακονῶν*). The word is similarly used in John xii. 26. The only other passage in which we find this verb translated to *serve* is Acts vi. 2.

Now we think a fair exegesis of the passages where this verb occurs (whether translated *serve* or *minister*) will show that it is used to indicate a service different from the ordinary service indicated by its two synonyms. The rareness of the instances in which this word is used helps to

<sup>1</sup> It is also used, as in Matt. x. 45, with the signification "to minister." But these instances would not materially change our exegesis. We choose the translation *serve* from its special significance to the English ear.



give it this special significance. Couple this fact together with the special ceremony at the selection and inauguration of "the seven," and with its use to designate the kind of service to which they were thus specially elected, and we must conclude that they were in an order of service above that common to the brotherhood of Christians—that they were both servants *and* officers. They were certainly chosen to do what the rest of the brethren were not expected to do. "The seven" were *διάκονοι*, the brethren were *δοῦλοι*. *Διακονεῖν* is not used of ordinary Christian service, so far as we have been able to discover. We think that both the classical and New Testament use of the word justifies this statement. It seems to us that this usage of language and the special selection which appears to be sanctioned by the narrative in Acts, leave no room to doubt whether the deacons in our churches should be considered servants in the capacity of an *office*.

As we have already intimated, the duties which congregational churches require of those called deacons are not the ordinary duties of Christians, and were not so considered by the apostles; else why their call for an election of "the seven," to do, not duties which have fallen to the lot of the brethren, but the apostles? These duties, which still exist, are such that no one can assume them without being elected to discharge them as a specialty. Could any brother of the church assume to serve at the Lord's table, take charge of the funds of the church, distribute to the poor, etc., without he were appointed to do this? That would be strange Congregationalism indeed which would allow such assumption. The nature of the duties required, and the terms used in specifying them, justify us in calling the diaconate an office.

4. The fourth reason we shall notice is, that the diaconate seems to have been regarded as an office by the apostolic and primitive churches. In the first seven verses of the third chapter of first Timothy, Paul gives certain qualifications which must be found in those who hold "the office of a bishop." It is unnecessary to repeat them. The word

*ἐπίσκοπος*, *bishop*, is used technically. Now this fact is of great importance in aiding us to understand Paul's remarks about deacons in the same chapter (vs. 8-13). It seems very strange that the apostle should speak of officers in the church in the first seven verses, and then without any apparent turn begin to speak of the duties of the laity. Would not this be considered a breach of good rhetoric, of which Paul can hardly be charged? Would not so sudden a change, unannounced, confuse? Is it not fair to infer from the connection, that Paul uses *διάκονος* technically, as he does *ἐπίσκοπος*, since they are in the same connection, unless he informs us to the contrary? Besides, in specifying the qualifications of deacons (*διακόνους*) Paul uses precisely the same care as in specifying the qualifications of bishops. Why, unless they were alike considered as holding responsible official positions, which required characteristics not required in ordinary Christian service? It is fair to consider those who are spoken of in the same connection and in similar language as being in the same class.

The force of the connective *ὡσαύτως* must not be overlooked. It means "in the same way," "in like manner," "likewise." Here it clearly indicates similarity of responsibility, and so of station. This word would hardly have been used, if reference had been, in what it introduces, to those having no station. We should have had *ὡς ἑτέρως* instead. Its force is something as follows: I have given you directions about one class of officers; I now proceed to give you directions about the only other class of officers, deacons. Dr. Dexter says: "These directions clearly imply Paul's judgment that the office of deacon was the second office in the church. *ὡσαύτως* is evidently used, as it usually is, in comparison. But what comparison could there be, which would justify the use of so specific a word as this must be from its composition, if not between persons occupying similar stations? <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ellicott in commenting upon 1 Tim. iii. 8 says: "*ὡσαύτως*, 'in like manner,' as the foregoing class included in the *τοὺν ἐπίσκοπον*, v. 2; it was not to be *ὡς*

The anarthrous use of the word *διάκονος* in 1 Tim. iii. 8 and Phil. i. 1 is not to be overlooked. The article is omitted before this word in both these passages. It certainly would not have been omitted without good reason. The rule of the Greek is to use the article. There are cases in which it may be omitted. Winer, in common with other grammarians, lays down this rule: "This omission, however, only takes place where it produces no ambiguity, and leaves no doubt in the mind of the reader whether the object is to be understood as definite or indefinite." Stuart says that the article is usually placed before nouns designating anything *single* or *nomadic*, or which the writer or speaker deems so. "But on the very ground that these things are so definite in their nature as to leave no room for mistake, the article is often omitted where it might be inserted." Again, he says: "where there is no danger of mistake, the article is sometimes omitted." Then we may infer that the article was omitted before the word *διάκονος*, because it was an office so well known and understood that it required no special designation. It cannot be said that merely servants were meant; for a term so specific as *διάκονος* would signify nothing in a use so general.

There is still another argument: Paul, in writing to the Philippians, addresses "the saints in Christ Jesus which are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." Here "the bishops and deacons" are carefully distinguished from the rest of the brotherhood of Christians, as if they were a distinct order. But why were the "deacons" included in this special mention, if they are servants in the same sense and capacity only in which "the saints" are servants? The deacons are certainly spoken of as a distinct and well-known order of servants, in connection with the bishops.

Here again we are to notice the omission of the article before the words "bishops and deacons," as if they referred

*ἐπίσκοπος* in any of the necessary qualifications for the office of a deacon, but *ἑσάβητος*, as in the case of the bishops." That is, the comparison is between things similar, not dissimilar; between two classes of officers.

to well-known officers common to all the churches. This omission has special force here, because the article is used before *ἀγίους*. It is employed in its most distinctive use, by being repeated after the word *ἀγίους* to specify that the saints at Philippi were addressed, as in distinction from saints elsewhere. The idea is somewhat as follows; "Paul, etc., to all the saints (*τοῖς ἀγίοις*) in Christ Jesus"; but there are many saints in Christ Jesus; what ones do you mean? "Which are (*τοῖς οὖν*) at Philippi."<sup>1</sup> This method of address clearly shows, we think, that there were deacons, as officers, in the church at Philippi then (A.D. 63), "probably thirty years after the choice of Stephen and his fellows at Jerusalem." Schaff says of these officers of the apostolic church: "Thus these officers were living bonds of union between the congregation and its presbyters; taken from the bosom of the community; chosen entirely by the people themselves; intimately acquainted with their wants; and thus admirably qualified to assist the presbyters with council and action in all their official duties."<sup>2</sup>

The history of the primitive church shows that the office of deacon was at that time recognized and established. Neander speaks of it in this way. Guericke says: "The second ecclesiastical office in the single church was that of *deacon*." Schaff says: "Deacons, or helpers, appear first in the church at Jerusalem, seven in number. . . . The example of that church was followed in all other congregations, though without regard to the number seven."<sup>3</sup> Kurtz says that the office originated with the church at Jerusalem, and that "thence it spread to most other Christian communities."

Later history shows that the office still existed. A writer in Smith's Bible Dictionary says: "Traces of the primitive constitution and of the permanence of the diaconate are found even in the more developed system of which we find the commencement in the Ignatian epistles." The authority

<sup>1</sup> On this use of the Article see Winer (Andover, 1870), § 20, pp. 131-143.

<sup>2</sup> Apostolical Church, p. 534.

<sup>3</sup> History Christian Church, Vol. i. p. 134.

which some of the early deacons arrogated to themselves not only shows that the diaconate was at that time an established office of the church, but also affords a strong presumption that, as an office, it had grown with the growth of the church. Else how would deacons have undertaken to assume so much? Is it not likely that they were encouraged to assume priestly authority from the fact that they held an office? Ignatius speaks strongly of the reverence due to deacons. He styles them "ministers of the mysteries of Christ." "Study," says he, "to do all things in divine concord, under . . . . the deacons most dear to me, as those to whom is committed the ministry of Jesus Christ." As early as the time of this martyr-disciple of St. John, the general ecclesiastical corruption which affected the churches affected the diaconate. When the bishops were raised above the pastoral office, the diaconate was lifted from its early simplicity into an order of the clergy. Doubtless this corruption was due partly to the fact that certain spiritual duties come naturally to the lot of deacons. In the apostolic age we find Philip preaching, though this was probably not usual. In the third century the lines became still more clearly drawn by which the diaconate was made an order of the ministry. Guericke says: "After the fourth century the most influential person next to him [the bishop] was the *archdeacon*; while the *deacons* themselves, owing to their close connection with the bishop, obtained high authority, and in some instances even higher than that of the presbyters." They were called ἀκοὴ καὶ ὄφθαλμὸς καὶ στόμα, καρδία τε καὶ ψυχὴ ἐπισκόπου. Tertullian, like Ignatius, classes them with the bishops and presbyters. The fourth council of Carthage speaks of them thus: "Diaconus non ad sacerdotum, sed ad ministerium consecratus"; from which it appears that there was a tendency among deacons to assume too much. But why, unless they felt warranted to do so from official station?

Now it was manifestly a corruption of the early simplicity of the diaconate to raise it to the rank of the clergy. But does not this corruption show that, at the time it began, a

more than ordinary importance was attached to the diaconate — an importance that was not, and never had been, attached to mere ordinary service in the church? We are driven to suppose that, at about the end of the first century, a new office was created in the church, wholly unknown to the apostolic churches, or that the diaconate had been reckoned an office from the time of the choice of “the seven.” The first supposition is untenable, for it is against all history. Then the corruption in the diaconate, which began not far from the beginning of the second century, is a proof that it had always been regarded as a special function, invested with such peculiar duties as to cause it to be considered an office. If not, it is not easy to understand how deacons came to be reckoned as a third order of the clergy. As Dr. Dexter says: “The Puritans re-discovered and re-introduced the office as it was known to the apostles and the primitive church, but to this day, the hierarchical churches pervert it as the third order of the clergy.” Then, we think, the diaconate of modern congregational churches is the primitive office restored, which was corrupted by that hierarchical spirit which destroyed the apostolic simplicity of the churches.

5. The fifth reason we shall notice is, that it accords with the republican nature of congregational churches to call the diaconate an office. That is a democratic government in which the people say by their suffrage to certain persons: Here is a duty which we cannot do collectively, and we choose you as our servants to act for us, and as such we elect you to perform this duty, and by our choice bestow upon you certain powers and prerogatives with which the discharge of this duty is invested, and so place you in office over us; you are over us because such is our will, and, as being over us, you are our servants. A church, whose government is vested in itself, says thus to those whom it elects to serve it in capacities so special that no one may undertake the service unless elected to it. Certain things require to be done which the church as such cannot do. Certain persons, whose character is supposed to fit them specially for it,

are elected, by the suffrage of their peers, to discharge these duties. As we have already argued, this election signifies placing in office.

The derivation of this word (*ob facere*) and its signification indicate the duty such an election imposes. An office is "that which is laid upon, or taken up by, one person to perform for another; work to be performed for, or with reference to others; a special duty, trust, or charge conferred by authority, and for a public purpose; an employment undertaken by the commission and authority of the government." Now this definition comports exactly with the nature of the duties required of those who are called deacons; and the manner in which such duties are imposed, comports exactly with the republican spirit of Congregationalism. Therefore we think it belongs to the genius of our polity to call the diaconate an office, to which certain fit ones are elected by the church to serve the church. We think such a view to be thoroughly congregational. We cannot quite see how a church without such an office would be complete as a working congregational church. But this office constitutes a rank, only so far as any office in any democratic government constitutes a rank.

The modern diaconate in congregational churches we conceive to be one of the distinctive features of our polity. As such we cannot spare it. Neither do we see what is to be gained by wresting from it the dignity and weight which naturally attaches to an office. Much harm rather would be done. For it would remove one of the features of our polity; and, as we think, make the government of our churches liable to become an aristocracy instead of a democracy; and so tend to hinder the success of our order. If any one cannot see how this could be, let him remember the tendency on the part of every congregational church to shift the responsibility of its management, and he will see that, if there were no office such as is represented by the diaconate, the whole government of the church would substantially fall into the hands of the pastor *ex officio*. The diaconate serves as a

connecting link between the pastor and the church, to keep it from falling into a worse than hierarchical form of government. Said a congregational pastor, who leaned to Presbyterianism, to the writer; "I do not like Congregationalism, because a pastor of a congregational church is substantially a pope." While this is not true, it is nevertheless true that Congregationalism might issue in such a result if any restraint were removed. The diaconate, being a creation of the church, is an office in which the church, by its representatives, confers with the higher official, the pastor, in relation to matters which are made sure to be laid before the church for action, because the church is represented in official council. And so, the diaconate, as an office, serves both as a connecting link between the pastor and the church in official relation, and so helps to save the church from aristocracy if not from despotism, and also to keep the church from neglecting to insist on its rights in the management of its own affairs. We think there are certain things in the history of certain churches which give reason to apprehend such a result, if the diaconate should come to be regarded merely as unofficial service. We think there are instances in which congregational churches have been saved from the tyranny of a pastor's unwarrantable ambition by the intervention of certain staid and discreet men, recognized as officers of the church, and called deacons; because, perhaps, by virtue of their office, the deacons come into closer *official* contact with both pastor and church than either with the other. We mean simply by this, that the pastor is *the officer*, and the deacons his *special* advisers and helpers, furnished by election by the church.

We believe our polity to be scriptural; and therefore we do not see how any, as Congregationalists, can regard the diaconate otherwise than as an office. We think it would be as detrimental to take from, as to add to, the officers. Either course would be a departure from the scriptural order of things as Congregationalists understand it. We are not willing to leave out anything of the idea that lies at the



bottom of our ecclesiastical polity. There can be no doubt that the diaconate was regarded as an office in the apostolic church. Our polity is framed after this pattern, and so we believe it to be an essential part of the local church, as an organization, that it have two, and only two, officers — pastor and deacons. A church would be crippled if either were spared. This would be done substantially if either were denied the dignity of official station.

It is of the very first importance that men be chosen to the office of deacon, according to Paul's directions to Timothy (1 Tim. iii.). It does not seem to be quite congregational nor scriptural to elect and ordain men to this office for a limited time. The genius of our polity seems to be that the act is permanent. We recognize it as such. For after men have, for any reason, retired from the office, we still name them deacon, as retired clergymen, Reverend. It has been urged against this that if unfit men are chosen to this office they cannot be removed. One writer has affirmed that the instance is not on record in which an unfit man has been removed from the office of deacon. But if bad or unfit men are elected, the church has in its own hands the same remedy that exists in the case of bad or unfit pastors. Not only have churches set deacons aside from their office because of unfitness, but they have also excommunicated them from membership. No republican government is without means of removing bad men from office. And yet this act is guarded properly against abuse. The welfare of the government demands that it should be. So it is as much for the welfare of the church, as for the officers, that the pastorate and diaconate should be shielded from too easy assaults. And yet, if error is committed in the selection of deacons, there is a remedy in the hands of the church. Better here than in the hands of the pastor.

We are surprised and pained to see a tendency to ignore this office. Some, even pastors, have seemed to fear lest their deacons should magnify their office unduly. For ourselves, we have never had any difficulty in this direction,

but the opposite if any. We think that no church, and no pastor can afford to dispense with this *office*. It is usually true that the deacons of the church are men of sound judgment, earnest piety, and great weight of character. Can any pastor afford to deprive himself of the help of such wisdom, by ignoring this office in any way? He cannot reach all his flock for advice, but he can reach all his deacons. These are usually men who have been longer in a parish than the pastor in these days of short pastorates, and who know better than he can, the wants and peculiarities of the people to whom he is called to minister. From these men he will usually hear the simple facts unadorned by the tongue of gossip. We believe that many a pastor has been saved from trouble, by listening to the advice of his deacons. We believe also that many, especially young pastors, have fallen into serious difficulties, because they listened, not to the gray-haired wisdom of their deacons, but turned, like the foolish son of Solomon, to take counsel of the young men. For ourselves we have much to be thankful for in the good deacons whose wisdom has helped us in both our pastorates. We know and are sorry that deacons are sometimes bad men. So are pastors. But they are not all. Because we believe they are as a rule morally and spiritually helps to the prosperity of every church, and to the usefulness of every pastor, we have undertaken to defend their claim to be called *officers* of the church. May God raise up many more holy men to grace this office, who shall be as Stephen and Philip among the disciples of our Lord.